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To: <Harold_Varmus@nih.gov>
Subject: RE: Fwd: ebiomed
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Harold -

You raise an important point here -- that it's probably better to get delayed content but with full use, then current content which is essentially unusable. From an editorial boards point of view, the most can be learned by taking the MBC approach:

- continue current website
- provide delayed content to e-biosci
- evaluate performance of e-biosci and satisfaction with arrangement

MBC, because it's submitting delayed content, will not be charging authors additional fees as it's not assuming they'll lose significant revenues. This makes instituting the "experiment" very easy to do.

As an aside, I think Nick's extrapolation of lost revenue based on hit rates to journal issues is incorrect. If e.g. 30% of hits go to old content as compared to the most recent issue, does that really mean that 30% of subscribers would be willing to forgo the most recent issue? Although one might reason that 30% of the utility is in the back issues (in some sense), it doesn't follow that 30% of subscribers would be willing to terminate subscription. In other words, though the subscription may have lost 30% of its value, the remaining value (access to the current issue) is likely to be sufficiently important that virtually no users would terminate (which is what I believe). In the face of the current dispute, this is not critical except that it affects the simplicity of the MBC model.

David